



# UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
United States Patent and Trademark Office  
Address: COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS  
Washington, D.C. 20231  
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/732,346	12/07/2000	Robert S. Hoblit	RPS920000097US1	1677

25299 7590 02/12/2003

IBM CORPORATION  
PO BOX 12195  
DEPT 9CCA, BLDG 002  
RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC 27709

EXAMINER

ZEENDER, FLORIAN M

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3627

DATE MAILED: 02/12/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

# Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/732,346

Applicant(s)

HOBLIT ET AL.

Examiner

F. Ryan Zeender

Art Unit

3627

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

## Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

## Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 07 December 2000.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

## Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-39 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 14-39 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-13 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

## Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 07 December 2000 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☒ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.  
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

## Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).  
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:  
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.  
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.  
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).  
\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).  
a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

## Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 3 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**DETAILED ACTION**

***Election/Restrictions***

Restriction to one of the following inventions is required under 35 U.S.C. 121:

- I. Claims 1-13, drawn to a method of analyzing inventory using time frames, classified in class 705, subclass 28.
- II. Claims 14-26, drawn to a computer program product having a computer readable medium having logic thereon for analyzing inventory information, classified in class 711, subclass 100.
- III. Claims 27-39, drawn to a system having at least one POS terminal including a data processing system, classified in class 710, subclass 1.

The inventions are distinct, each from the other because of the following reasons:

Inventions I and II are related as process and apparatus for its practice. The inventions are distinct if it can be shown that either: (1) the process as claimed can be practiced by another materially different apparatus or by hand, or (2) the apparatus as claimed can be used to practice another and materially different process. (MPEP § 806.05(e)). In this case, invention "I" can be done by hand.

Inventions I and III are related as process and apparatus for its practice. Again, invention "I" can be done by hand.

Inventions II and III are unrelated. Inventions are unrelated if it can be shown that they are not disclosed as capable of use together and they have different modes of operation, different functions, or different effects (MPEP § 806.04, MPEP § 808.01). In the instant case the different inventions are not capable of use together and they have

Art Unit: 3627

different modes of operation in that the program product of invention II functions as a memory unit.

Because these inventions are distinct for the reasons given above and have acquired a separate status in the art as shown by their different classification, restriction for examination purposes as indicated is proper.

During a telephone conversation with Mr. John Flynn on 2/4/03 a provisional election was made without traverse to prosecute the invention of invention I, claims 1-13. Affirmation of this election must be made by applicant in replying to this Office action. Claims 14-39 withdrawn from further consideration by the examiner, 37 CFR 1.142(b), as being drawn to a non-elected invention.

Applicant is reminded that upon the cancellation of claims to a non-elected invention, the inventorship must be amended in compliance with 37 CFR 1.48(b) if one or more of the currently named inventors is no longer an inventor of at least one claim remaining in the application. Any amendment of inventorship must be accompanied by a request under 37 CFR 1.48(b) and by the fee required under 37 CFR 1.17(i).

### ***Drawings***

The drawings are objected to because the page margins (especially for Figs. 2 and 3) are too small. A proposed drawing correction or corrected drawings are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

### ***Claim Objections***

Art Unit: 3627

✓ Claim 5 is objected to because of the following informalities: In line 2, it is not clear how sales data can be "collected by an on-line inventory". Appropriate correction/clarification is required.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101***

✓ Claims 1-4, 6-10 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter.

The basis of this rejection is set forth in a two-prong test of:

- (1) whether the invention is within the technological arts; and
- (2) whether the invention produces a useful, concrete, and tangible result.

For a claimed invention to be statutory, the claimed invention must be within the technological arts. Mere ideas in the abstract (i.e., abstract idea, law of nature, natural phenomena) that do not apply, involve, use, or advance the technological arts fail to promote the "progress of science and the useful arts" (i.e., the physical sciences as opposed to social sciences, for example) and therefore are found to be non-statutory subject matter. For a process claim, the recited process must somehow apply, involve, use, or advance the technological arts.

In the present case, the claims only recite an abstract idea. The recited steps of merely obtaining information about inventory and performing an analysis to determine if any items have performed unexpectedly, does not apply, involve, use, or advance the technological arts since all of the recited steps can be performed in the mind of the user or by use of a pencil and paper. These steps only constitute an idea of how to determine which items have performed unexpectedly.

Additionally, for a claimed invention to be statutory, the claimed invention must produce a useful, concrete, and tangible result. In the present case, the result is the notification of items that performed unexpectedly.

Although the recited process produces a useful, concrete, and tangible result, since the claimed invention, as a whole, is not within the technological arts as explained above, the claims are deemed to be directed to non-statutory subject matter.

*It is suggested by the Examiner that the applicant relate the claims to the technological arts by linking the method steps to a computer. For example, in claim 1, line 1, it is suggested, "A method" be changed to –A computerized method--; and in line 8, "time frame" be changed to –time frame using a processor--.*

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kagami et al.

Kagami et al. teach the limitations of the claim 1 (see specifically Fig. 2, and Col. 5, lines 6-41) except the specific teaching of "notifying an interested party" (the reference only teaches giving "advice to modify"; Col. 5, lines 40-41).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Kagami et al. to notify "an interested party" of the advice to modify

Art Unit: 3627

the inventory control system, in order to provide a manager with the necessary information to act on the advice and hence change the system to improve the system's future accuracy.

Re claims 2-13: The reference lacks the specific teaching of all of the limitations in the claims, however, these added limitations are well known in the art of inventory control and it would have been an obvious design choice at the time of the invention to modify Kagami et al. to include any one of the limitations of claims 2-13 in order to provide certain desired results.

### ***Conclusion***

The prior art made of record on the PTO-892 and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to F. Ryan Zeender whose telephone number is (703) 308-8351. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm.

The receptionist's phone number for the Technology center is (703) 308-1113 and the customer service number is (703) 872-9325.

 2/6/03

F. Zeender  
Primary Examiner, A.U. 3627  
February 6, 2003